

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Miller: No To Delays; Reform CT Eminent Domain Law Now



Saying property ownership is one of the most fundamental rights Americans enjoy under the United States Constitution, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller, R-122nd District, today called for action within the next few weeks to reform Connecticut's eminent domain law.

"This is not a difficult or complex issue. It is actually quite simple. What it boils down to is whether we delay taking meaningful action by asking municipalities to observe an informal moratorium on eminent domain land seizures while the state legislature holds public hearings on changing the law – as the General Assembly's majority Democrats have proposed - or to move quickly to enact legislation to protect families whose homes are in imminent danger of being taken by cities or towns for economic development purposes," Representative Miller said.

"In the wake of the June 23rd U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a New London eminent domain case that put property rights throughout Connecticut in jeopardy, I believe the state legislature must take action quickly to protect property rights before other municipalities seeking to maximize their tax base authorize the seizure of more people's homes," Representative Miller said.

As long ago as April 6, 1815, Thomas Jefferson said the protection of property rights is: "the first principle of association, the guarantee to everyone of a free exercise of his industry, and the fruits acquired by it," Representative Miller said.

House Republicans plan to introduce a reform measure during an upcoming special session when the legislature is required to return to the Capitol to reconsider bills vetoed by Gov. M. Jodi Rell during the regular session, said Representative Miller, who said he would cosponsor the measure.

"In a narrow 5-4 decision, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that homes could be taken for private development purposes. Many of my legislative colleagues and I tried to curb that unprecedented extension of government power during the final hours of the June 28th special legislative session. Now the majority Democrats are backing off from the indefensible position they took two weeks ago when they rejected our proposal," Representative Miller said.

“When the court issued its ruling, it also invited Connecticut to change its law to protect homeowners’ rights. We’ve talked about this since last year. The time to act is now,” Representative Miller said.

The House Republican proposal would delete from the existing law six lines that permit development agencies to seize property for economic development. The measure would leave unchanged the right of municipalities and the State of Connecticut to acquire property under eminent domain for traditional public works projects, such as the construction of roads, bridges and schools, and to deal with truly blighted properties that pose health or safety hazards, Representative Miller said.